

GAI

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Proposal for Archeological Investigations at the  
Friendsville Site (18GA23), Garrett County, Maryland

Introduction

Baseman 1971

One of the largest, most important prehistoric Indian sites in Maryland, and one of only three similar sites known in Garrett County, is situated on a flat along the west bank of the Youghiogheny River where the proposed National Freeway and relocated Route 42 are to be built at Friendsville. According to local tradition, the site was occupied by a Shawnee Indian village when the first Euro-American settlers came to Garrett County in the 1760's (Hoye 1937; Olsen 1964). The tradition is plausible, but available archeological and historical data indicate that the Shawnee were comparatively recent and temporary residents in western Maryland and that the major occupants at the Friendsville site relate to earlier cultures between about A. D. 1000 and 1675. The ethnic affiliation of even the latest of these earlier Indians is uncertain, however (Hoffman 1964; Mayer-Oakes 1955; White 1969).\*

Previous Archeological Investigations

In recent years most of the site has been covered by a few houses and large lawns. The central part of the site was exposed in a garden about 20 years ago, and a description written at that time states: "The soil is extremely black and deep and one never fails to find potsherds, flint chips, bones, etc. when searching the surface for artifacts. . . . The site has never been excavated up to the present time (Corliss 1950). A test excavation, consisting of one 10-foot square in the vicinity of what is now the northeast corner of the gravel parking lot at the Minnich Funeral Home, was conducted by the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh in 1950 (Mayer-Oakes 1955: 252; Corliss, personal communication). A detailed report on the investigation is not available at this time, but

many sherds, bones, and historic artifacts (presumably including 17th century trade goods) were recovered (Corliss 1954: 8).

#### Investigations by the Maryland Geological Survey

A brief reconnaissance of the site was made in September, 1969, in order to determine its present condition and extent. The area reported to be so productive by Corliss and tested by the Carnegie Museum is now covered by lawn and a gravel parking lot. However, sherds, flakes, and a point were found on the surface where soil was exposed around shrubbery near the Minnich Funeral Home and an adjacent parking lot. (Our surface exploration did not extend south of the north edge of the latter field because at that time we were not aware that Route 42 is to be relocated through this area.) There were no surface exposures in the area to be directly affected by construction of the National Freeway north of the funeral home, so a series of small tests were dug in that area. The kind and quantity of artifacts recovered (see appendix for a detailed description of the tests) and the configuration of the surface, which begins to slope to a lower level in this area, suggests that the site ends in this vicinity. However, no tests were made in the vicinity of the Methodist Parsonage where the ground is higher and may contain an extension of the site.

It is clear that the proposed National Freeway and relocation of Highway 42 at Friendsville will destroy at least two portions of the site. Both of these areas should be thoroughly studied prior to construction of the highway because (1) adequate understanding of any archeological site requires extensive sampling over the entire site, and (2) there is no assurance that the portions of the site unaffected by the proposed highway construction will be available for study in the future or that it will not be destroyed before archeological investigations can be carried out. In broader perspective, investigation

of the Friendsville site is necessary (1) in order that our understanding of the late prehistoric cultures in western Maryland will be based on samples from several sites, and (2) because we do not know how many other known late prehistoric sites in western Maryland will be available for future investigation. The Friendsville site should contribute to our understanding of the ethnic affiliation of the late prehistoric and proto-historic Indians of western Maryland, particularly if the site contains early trade items as suggested by the Carnegie Museum tests. The archeological investigations and the resulting museum displays and published reports will have much value and interest to the people of Garrett County where strong traditions persist about the Indian village discovered at Friendsville by the first settlers.

#### Recommendations

The importance and large extent of the Friendsville site require that extensive excavation be undertaken before road construction begins. In the area of the site to be crossed by the National Freeway a series of long, hand dug trenches will locate archeological features and determine if there are widespread disturbances of the top soil which could be removed with power equipment. Since that part of the site to be crossed by relocated Route 42 is a cultivated field, the plow zone can be striped off with power equipment after brief hand testing has determined the nature and depth of the subsoil. The soils at the site are sandy, so use of a Gradall backhoe would be advisable in order to minimize disturbance of the subsoil.

The depth of striping will be less than 1 foot in both areas unless modern fill is encountered. Maximum horizontal extent of the excavations

will be limited on the north and south by the right of ways of the new highways. To the east and west the excavations will be limited by the extent of the site except for the area occupied by Riverside Drive. After the top soil is stripped, digging will penetrate the subsoil in small areas to explore archeological features such as storage pits, hearths, or burials. At the conclusion of the archeological investigations, backfilling can be accomplished by power equipment of any type conveniently available.

It is estimated that the above work could be accomplished in 8 weeks with the help of eight laborers and one trained assistant working under the direct supervision of the State Archeologist. Use of power equipment would involve a maximum of four successive days removing top soil and one day backfilling.

#### Acknowledgements

Mr. Frank R. Corliss, Jr. of Stanton, Maryland notified me in August, 1969 of the impending destruction of the Friendsville site. About two weeks later he provided me with a first hand introduction to many of the aspects of Garrett County archeology, including the Friendsville site. Mr. Corliss' long and knowledgeable interest in the archeology of the Garrett County area, and his generosity in sharing his experiences and information have proven to be of inestimable value in developing my own understanding of the area. Mr. Olin Friend of Friendsville kindly allowed me to dig holes in his lawn, and Mr. Carroll Rush encouraged Mr. Corliss and I to examine the yard of the Winnich Funeral Home.

## APPENDIX

## Maryland Geological Survey Explorations at the Friendsville Site (18QA23)

## Archeological Survey, September 14, 1969

The following Indian artifacts were found on the surface around the Minnich Funeral Home and in the plowed field to the south:

- 3 limestone-tempered sherds (1 rimsherd with exterior cord-roughening and flat, sloping lip; 1 body sherd with exterior cord-roughening; 1 plain body sherd)
- 1 shell-tempered body sherd with plain surfaces
- 1 small, thick triangular projectile point of gray chert
- 2 flakes (1 light gray chert, 1 black chert)
- 1 burned bone fragment

## Archeological Tests, September 15, 1969

Seven small tests were dug in a 10-meter grid in the front (east) and north lawns of the Olin Friend house which is located between the Winnich Funeral Home and the parsonage of the Methodist Church on Riverside Drive in Friendsville. Each of the seven tests was approximately 35 cm. square, and all but one yielded Indian artifacts.

Sandy loam was the only kind of soil encountered, but two profile types were observed. In tests 1, 2 and 7 (all in the south half of the area tested, i. e., toward the center of the site as determined by previous investigations) there is 7 to 10 cm. of dark gray or brown soil containing nails, broken glass and other historic artifacts. Underlying the dark top soil is 13 to 15 cm. of brown soil containing prehistoric Indian debris (pottery, flint flakes, and fire-cracked rocks). The bottom 10 cm. of the tests encountered a third zone consisting of light brown sandy soil with a few pebbles and extending to an undetermined depth; no cultural remains



were noted in this lower zone.

The second kind of soil profile was encountered in the north half of the area tested (tests 3-6), and it consists of 20 to 30 cm. of dark top soil containing a mixture of historic and aboriginal artifacts. This is underlain by light brown sand or sandy loam which extends to an undetermined depth and from which no cultural remains were recovered.

Plausible interpretations of the two profiles are that the former (south half of area tested) is relatively undisturbed so that a zone containing Indian occupations is overlain by soil containing historic refuse, and that the latter profile type (north half of area tested) is extensively disturbed by plowing so that all of the Indian and historic artifacts are mixed together in one zone.

The artifacts recovered from each of the tests are as follows:

Test 1 - 7 flakes: 4 gray chert, 3 indurated siltstone?  
19 fire-cracked rocks  
1 cut nail  
1 wine bottle fragment (19th century or later)

Test 2 - 22 plain, grit-tempered sherds 7-9 mm. thick; includes a straight, undecorated rim with flat lip; all appear to be from one vessel (Late Woodland)  
2 tiny sherds, highly weathered and apparently lacking temper; one seems to have cord-roughening and several small angular punctations on the exterior surface  
1 tiny, plain-surfaced sherd from which the temper (limestone?) has been leached (early Late Prehistoric)  
4 flakes of chert  
4 nails  
3 clinkers

Test 3 - 1 flake scraper, of light gray chert  
9 flakes: 4 gray chert, 1 tan chert, 4 indurated siltstone?  
1 fire-cracked rock  
15 glass slag fragments  
3 nails  
1 "Champion" spark plug

Test 4 - 2 flakes of gray chert  
 2 glass slag fragments  
 1 window glass fragment  
 3 nails

Test 5 - 3 glass slag fragments  
 1 milk glass fragment  
 1 clear glass fragment, edges melted

Test 6 - 2 flakes of chert  
 13 glass slag fragments  
 3 glass fragments  
 1 earthenware sherd, white glazed  
 2 nails, 1 bone fragment

Test 7 - 1 flake, gray chert  
 1 glass fragment

The distribution of the artifacts is summarized in the following table;

Tests	Number of specimens recovered	
	Indian	Historic (Euro-American)
1	7	2
2	29	7
3	10	19
4	2	6
5	-	5
6	2	20
7	1	1
Total	51	60

The Indian artifacts are concentrated in tests 1, 2, and 3. Reference to the attached plan reveals that these tests are those nearest the river and Min-ich Funeral Home where previous investigations have shown the main part of the site to be located.

Comments on the Artifacts

Pottery is the most diagnostic artifact recovered from our investigations at Friendsville. Previous archeological studies in western Maryland and in adjacent states indicate that grit tempering (crushed rock other than chert or limestone) is characteristic of Late Woodland complexes (ca. A.D. 500 to 1000), and that limestone tempering is most common at early Late Prehistoric sites (beginning about A.D. 1000). As the historic period is approached, the limestone tempering is gradually replaced by shell tempering (Corliss and Wright 1967; Wright 1959). Most of the sherds recovered by the Geological Survey have grit temper, but since all of these seem to be from one vessel, the small sample is greatly biased. Most of the other sherds have limestone or shell temper so that a predominately Late Prehistoric affiliation is indicated. The small, triangular, unnotched point of chert and the flakes of chert are characteristic of Late Prehistoric cultures in Western Maryland. The few flakes of indurated siltstone (?) may be from an earlier complex. All of the artifacts of Euro-American origin appear to be of types in common use in the late 19th century or later. These few artifacts are admittedly inadequate for estimating the exact nature of the Friendsville site, but combined with information previously collected by Corliss (1950; 1954) and the Carnegie Museum (Mayer-Oakes 1955), and our general knowledge of the archeology in this region (Mayer-Oakes 1955), there would seem to be little doubt that the site will prove to be highly significant.



extending below the disturbed top soil, and suggest that burials are present. The existence of post molds is especially significant because they are very delicate and are not typically preserved at all sites although they are critical to the determination of house types and community plan.

Tyler Bastian  
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# Addendum

After the preceding report was completed, copies of the field notes from the 1950 Carnegie Museum investigations at the Friendsville site were kindly supplied by Dr. Don W. Drago, Curator, Section of Man, Carnegie Museum. Four test squares, each approximately 5 feet square, were excavated south and southeast of the Minnich Funeral Home, as shown on the accompanying highway plan. The typical soil profile is 25 to 30 cm. of "black loam" containing both Indian and historic artifacts and overlying sterile "yellow sand;" it apparently resembles the profile encountered in the north half of the area tested by the Maryland Geological Survey. Prominent light and dark bands at the base of the "black loam" in two of the tests dug by the Carnegie Museum appear to be plow streaks and suggest that some of the cultural deposits have been thoroughly mixed by plowing. In one test, however, "dark loam" containing artifacts extended up to 20 cm. below the base of the "black loam." A shallow pit 15 cm. deep and about 2 miles in diameter appeared to be undisturbed as it contained only Indian artifacts, including sherds, chert flakes, large pieces of charcoal, and broken stones. Along one edge of the pit were three post holes, one of which extended 15 cm. below the top of the pit.

The artifacts are not described in detail in the field notes, but they are evidently similar to those recovered by the Maryland Geological Survey; they are available for study at the Carnegie Museum. In addition to the data recovered from the excavations, local informants stated that burials had been found about 1946 when a basement was dug.

The Carnegie Museum's investigations at Friendsville tend to confirm our previous estimates of the site. In addition, they provide direct evidence for the presence of aboriginal pits and post molds

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